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OD(79) 1st Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a Meeting held at  
10 Downing Street on  
MONDAY 14 MAY 1979 at 11.30 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP  
Secretary of State for the  
Home Department

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham  
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Lord Carrington  
Secretary of State for Foreign and  
Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon Lord Soames  
Lord President of the Council

The Rt Hon Sir Ian Gilmour MP  
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon John Nott MP  
Secretary of State for Trade

SECRETARIAT

Sir John Hunt  
Sir Clive Rose  
Mr C A Whitmore

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1. RHODESIA

The Committee had before them a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(79) 3) on future policy towards Rhodesia.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the purpose of his paper was to discuss how to carry out the Manifesto commitment in regard to Rhodesia. This was to the effect that if the six Principles were satisfied, it would be the duty of the Conservative Government to bring Rhodesia back to a state of legality, to lift sanctions and to seek to secure international recognition for the Salisbury regime. Expectation in the Party and also generally in the country was that the Government would move to early recognition, especially if, as seemed likely, Lord Boyd reported that the elections had been fairly conducted. On the other hand, if we moved too quickly, this would have adverse consequences for our international interests. Time was therefore needed for consultation. He had had an opportunity on 13 May to explain the Government's position to his Community colleagues who had shown understanding but had expressed concern at the possible effect on Namibia of any early move on Rhodesia. He was due to see the United States Secretary of State, Mr Vance, on 21 May. A senior official of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Antony Duff, was due to leave that day for Rhodesia in order to make contact with Bishop Muzorewa. The aim would be to discover from the Bishop how he intended to proceed. Depending on his talks with Mr Vance and Sir Antony Duff's report, he was in favour of sending a high level emissary out to discuss both with Bishop Muzorewa and with others how to handle the question of recognition. We should need to urge the Bishop to make his Government appear more African than it looked like being at present, and try to negotiate an amendment to the Constitution to reduce the built-in safeguards for the Whites, which were an obvious target for criticism. No immediate decision was required about recognition and Bishop Muzorewa was not due to take over the Government until the beginning of June. It would be desirable to avoid any action which would disrupt the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in early August. On the other hand, we would have to complete the process before the Sanctions Order was due to come up for renewal in November.

In discussion it was argued that we might have to move faster than suggested. In particular, the Prime Minister would need to say something positive in the House of Commons on 15 May. She could refer to consultations which were going on and

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would wish to say that she had been in touch with Lord Boyd. She might also make the point that both sides of the House were agreed on the Six Principles and that the need now was to confirm whether they were satisfied. The Australian Government had already expressed some anxiety about the effect on the Commonwealth of the Government moving too fast. But there was a case for giving an early lead which, after initial objections, might in due course, be generally accepted. The main difficulties would be with Tanzania, Zambia and Nigeria. On the other hand Kenya, Malawi, Botswana and Mozambique were unlikely to cause serious trouble. As regards the legal position, it was suggested that in order to avoid difficulties in the Security Council, where progress might be blocked by a Soviet veto, we should consider taking steps to return Rhodesia to legality by declaring that the rebellion was terminated, which would remove the basis for the original United Nations action.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that in her speech in the House she would follow generally the line in paragraph 11 of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's memorandum. She would welcome the developments which had led to the elections in Rhodesia, report that a senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office official had been sent out to establish initial contact with Bishop Muzorewa on behalf of the Government, refer to the forthcoming consultations between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Mr Vance and undertake to arrange for publication of Lord Boyd's report. As regards the latter, she would see Lord Boyd before speaking in the House with a view to being able to tell the House in general terms of his conclusions. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should arrange for a passage to be drafted covering these points. Consultations should proceed on the basis proposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, but we should not assume that we had much time before we would need to reach and announce a firm decision on recognition.

The Committee -

Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion, and invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to take action accordingly.

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## 2. STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS

The Committee had before them a minute of 11 May 1979 from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to the Prime Minister on the response the Government should make in public to the announcement that President Carter of the United States and President Brezhnev of the Soviet Union would meet on 15 June 1979 to sign a new strategic Arms Limitation Agreement.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that now that the present round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) had been virtually concluded and the date for the summit meeting between President Carter and President Brezhnev had been announced, there was growing public interest in this country in the subject and the Government would come under increasing pressure to declare their attitude. He expected, for example, to be questioned about it at a press conference later that day. Nobody thought that the new Agreement was perfect, but there would be serious consequences if it was not ratified. President Carter had invested a great deal of personal prestige in the Agreement, and it would be a very damaging blow to his authority if he failed to get it ratified by the United States Senate. There would also be the further implications which he had set out in paragraph 6 of his minute of 11 May. The line the British Government took in public on SALT would be an important factor in President Carter's efforts to secure ratification. If we gave the impression of being critical, this would add substantially to his difficulties. More generally, our public attitude to SALT was likely to set the tone of relations with the American Administration from whom we would need help on a number of key issues like the replacement of Polaris and Rhodesia. Though we needed to examine in greater depth the detail of the new Agreement, it was in our wider foreign policy and defence interests to be ready to give a reasonably forthcoming response in public now on the lines he had suggested in paragraph 8 of his minute. He also proposed to say at his press conference that he would be discussing the SALT agreement and the prospects for SALT III with the United States Secretary of State, Mr Vance, during the latter's visit to London the following week.

In discussion it was argued that the assessment at paragraph 6(a) of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute was open to doubt. It was likely that the Soviet Union were so ready to welcome the new SALT Agreement because

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it did not restrict their capacity to improve their strategic capability but in practice allowed them to do as much as they were physically and technically capable of achieving in the timescale whether there was an Agreement or not, whereas it imposed genuine constraints on the United States whose strategic capability would have been greater if there had been no Agreement. It was this fear that called in to question the wisdom of the second half of the second sentence of the public line which the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was proposing in paragraph 8 of his minute. On the other hand, it was pointed out that there was already so much <sup>overkill</sup> ~~overskill~~ in the American and Russian strategic capabilities that arguments about superiority at that level were academic. More important were the implications of SALT II for Europe. The Soviet Union possessed a great superiority in systems targetted on Western Europe. These were not covered by the new SALT agreement, and there was concern that the Americans might be pursuing their own interests at the expense of those of the Europeans.

In further discussion it was argued that we should be ready to give public support for the SALT Treaty, as President Giscard of France and the Federal German Chancellor, Herr Schmidt, had done. Chancellor Schmidt had said at the press conference which he and the Prime Minister had given on 11 May that he was in favour of a quick ratification process. The Prime Minister, without welcoming the Treaty, had said that she took very much the same view as Chancellor Schmidt and that we trusted that the Treaty would be ratified.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Committee had reservations about SALT II and its implications for the United Kingdom and for this reason she was not prepared to say positively that we welcomed the new Agreement. But we could not overlook the extent to which President Carter's personal authority was engaged in the effort to secure ratification of the Treaty. Moreover, the Agreement had taken six years to negotiate and if it was <sup>rejected</sup> ~~dejected~~ now, the consequences would be far-reaching. The subsequent uncertainty would create its own dangers. For these reasons we should be prepared to support the Agreement in public, whatever our private hesitations about it. Our line should accordingly be based on the formula proposed in paragraph 8 of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 11 May but with the deletion of the words "and believe that SALT II is an important step on the long road to a more stable and peaceful world". It should, however, be amplified to say

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that we hoped that the Treaty would be ratified quickly, in accordance with the statement she had made at her press conference with Chancellor Schmidt on 11 May.

The Committee -

Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion and invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to be guided accordingly.

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## 3. EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY MATTERS

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the informal meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Nine, under French chairmanship, held over the weekend had been a very friendly affair. Much of the time had been devoted to the Middle East where positions seemed to be hardening. The suggestion had therefore been made for a European initiative which would put pressure on Israel to be more forthcoming over the approach to the next stage of the peace negotiations. He would discuss this possibility with the United States Secretary of State, Mr Vance, when he visited this country on 21-22 May since clearly such a move ought to command American support: but if the United States felt unable to take further steps themselves they might well welcome a European initiative. On specific Community matters he had of course referred to our problems over the Budget and the Common Agriculture Policy but this had not been a meeting for substantive negotiations.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that continued and determined efforts would be required in order to bring home to our partners the inequality of our contribution to the budget. Her own talks with Chancellor Schmidt had shown that the Germans still did not accept the arithmetic of the matter. In pressing our case for change we should of course continue to stress our commitment to the Community and should consider taking a more forthcoming stance on matters which did not intrinsically matter to us but where the previous Administration had blocked otherwise unanimous Community decisions merely because they implied an extension of the Community's role. These included a number of maritime and environment matters, such as Community accession to the Bonn and Barcelona Conventions on marine pollution.

The Committee -

Took note.

Cabinet Office

15 May 1979

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## ~~DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY COMMITTEE~~

### MINUTES OF MEETINGS

No. of Meeting	Date of Meeting	Papers Considered	Subjects Discussed
1st	14.5.79	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. RHODESIA</li> <li>2. STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS</li> <li>3. EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY MATTERS</li> </ol>
2nd	11.6.79	6 } 8 } 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SALES OF TANKS TO JORDAN</li> <li>2. DEFENCE SALES TO CHINA; FUTURE POLICY</li> </ol>
3rd	5.7.79	10	RHODESIA
4th	10.7.79	16 18 12 } 13 } 14 } 15 }	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DEFENCE COSTS IN GERMANY</li> <li>2. EEC: POST STRASBOURG STRATEGY</li> <li>3. VIETNAMESE REFUGEEES</li> <li>4. NORTHERN IRELAND</li> </ol>
5th	23.7.79	21 19  17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. RHODESIA</li> <li>2. ARMS FOR THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY</li> <li>3. FUTURE LIGHTWEIGHT TORPEDO</li> </ol>
6th	15.9.79	24	EEC BUDGET CONTRIBUTION: THE NEXT STEPS
7th	19.9.79	22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CHILE</li> <li>2. FUTURE LIGHTWEIGHT TORPEDO</li> </ol>
8th	3.10.79	26  27	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL PROGRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND <i>L.C.A.</i></li> <li>2. NORTHERN IRELAND: CROSS-BORDER SECURITY</li> </ol>

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No. of Meeting

Date of Meeting

Papers Considered

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Subjects Discussed

No. of Meeting	Date of Meeting	Papers Considered	Subjects Discussed
9th	8.10.79	25	UNITED KINGDOM COMMUNITY BUDGET CONTRIBUTION: CORRECTIVE MECHANISMS
10th	17.10.79	32	POLITICAL PROGRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND <i>L.C.A.</i>
11th	24.10.79	34	1 THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY: NEXT STEPS
		36	2 COMMUNITY BUDGET: GNP CRITERION
		33 } 35 }	3 COMMUNITY BUDGET: NEGOTIATING TACTICS <i>L.C.A.</i>
12th	5.11.79	38	1 RHODESIA
		37	2 EXPORT CREDITS FOR SOUTH AFRICA
		39	3 NORTHERN IRELAND: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
			4 PLANNED REDUCTIONS IN BBC EXTERNAL SERVICES
13th	3.12.79	30	1 RHODESIA 2 BINGHAM REPORT 3 FUTURE UNITED KINGDOM DEFENCE POLICY

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### DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

#### MEMORANDA

Serial No.	Date	Brief Description
1	8. 5.79	COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE Note by the Secretary of the Cabinet
2	10. 5.79	GILBERT ISLANDS INDEPENDENCE Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal
3	11. 5.79	RHODESIA Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
4	18. 5.79	POLICY TOWARDS THE SULTANATE OF OMAN Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
5	6. 6.79	DEFENCE SALES TO CHINA: FUTURE POLICY Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
6	6. 6.79	SALE OF TANKS TO JORDAN Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence
7	-	NOT ISSUED (Note)
8	6. 6.79	SALE OF TANKS TO JORDAN Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
9	20. 6.79	ST VINCENT: INDEPENDENCE Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
10	2. 7.79	RHODESIA: LORD HARLECH'S REPORT Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
11	2. 7.79	RHODESIA Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
12	5. 7.79	NORTHERN IRELAND: THE OVERALL SITUATION Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
13	5. 7.79	NORTHERN IRELAND: POLITICS Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

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Serial No.	Date	Brief Description
14	5. 7.79	NORTHERN IRELAND: LAW AND ORDER Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
15	5. 7.79	NORTHERN IRELAND: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
16	5. 7.79	DEFENCE COSTS IN GERMANY Note by the Secretaries
17 ADDENDUM	5. 6.79 9. 7.79	FUTURE LIGHTWEIGHT TORPEDO Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence
18	5. 6.79	EEC BUDGET: POST STRASBOURG STRATEGY Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer
19	19. 7.79	RHODESIA - POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS ON BRITISH POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
20	10. 7.79	CONSULAR FEES (AMENDMENT) BILL Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
21	19. 7.79	RHODESIA Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
22	29. 8.79	FUTURE LIGHTWEIGHT TORPEDO Note by the Secretary of State for Defence
23	24. 9.79	THE MANDATORY ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
24	10. 9.79	EEC BUDGET CONTRIBUTION: THE NEXT STEPS Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer
25	27. 9.79	UNITED KINGDOM COMMUNITY BUDGET CONTRIBUTION: CORRECTIVE MECHANISMS Note by the Secretaries
26	28. 9.79	PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL PROGRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
27	1.10.79	NORTHERN IRELAND: CROSS-BORDER SECURITY Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
28	3.10.79	PAPUA NEW GUINEA, WESTERN SAMOA AND NAURU (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

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Serial No.	Date	Brief Description
29	5.10.79	FUTURE UNITED KINGDOM DEFENCE POLICY: THE BACKGROUND Note by the Secretary of State for Defence
30	8.10.79	FUTURE UNITED KINGDOM DEFENCE POLICY Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence
31	12.10.79	FALKLAND ISLANDS Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
32	12.10.79	POLITICAL PROGRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
33	17.10.79	COMMUNITY BUDGET: POSSIBLE INSTRUMENTS OF PRESSURE Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
34	18.10.79	THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY: NEXT STEPS Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland
35	18.10.79	EEC BUDGET: CONTINGENCY PLANNING Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer
36	19.10.79	QUALIFYING CONDITIONS FOR A CORRECTIVE MECHANISM: THE ROBUSTNESS OF A GDP PER HEAD CRITERION Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer
37	1.11.79	EXPORT CREDITS FOR SOUTH AFRICA Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Trade
38	2.11.79	RHODESIA Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
39	2.11.79	NORTHERN IRELAND: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
40	26.11.79	SOUTHERN RHODESIA: ZIMBABWE INDEPENDENCE BILL Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
41	-	NOT ISSUED (Note)
42	29.11.79	NEW HEBRIDES INDEPENDENCE Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs